

The Knower of Deep Sleep

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Danny: “The object in deep sleep is the absence of thoughts.”

This is something I am contemplating today.

It's not me, the *jiva*, who witnesses the absence of objects in deep sleep, and it's not me the *jiva* who witnesses the “dream world” in the dream state. And it's not me the *jiva* who witness the “dream” called the waking state. However, that's the hardest part to get the mind around; it's I, awareness, who witness the dream of *Maya*, in all three states.

Arlindo: The *jiva* (experiencing entity) is the reflection of consciousness in the subtle body – or in other words, *jiva* = consciousness + *Maya* + subtle body – to produce reflected consciousness, the *jiva*. During the dreamless sleep the subtle body is “off,” so *jiva* (the reflection) is off, i.e. no projection.

In the dream state, it is the causal body (one's *vasana* load) that reflects/projects the purely “subjective” dream world, which is but the material content/impression of *jiva's* unconscious mind collected during *jiva's* waking state.

But the reflection of pure consciousness in the causal body does not produce a sentient *jiva*, a self-conscious entity with free will. That is because the causal body is not dominated by *sattvic* energy but by *tamas*.

Jiva is the reflection of consciousness on the mirror-like apparatus, the “subtle body,” which is constituted by a dominance of *sattva*.

Therefore it is more reasonable to say that pure awareness, and not the *jiva*, experiences the deep-sleep state, but since pure awareness is not an experiencing entity, scriptures would rather say that *jiva's* causal body (subconscious mind) experiences the absence of objects of the dreamless sleep state.

This subtle experience of absence of objects leaves behind a very subtle impression or memory, which in retrospect allows us to remember the peaceful and limitless experience of no contact with thoughts/objects. We cannot have a memory of an experience without an entity to capture the experience. The point to be made is that the absence of objects does not exclude the presence of the subject/experiencer. Having said that, in order to experience dreamless sleep, we also need a *vritti*, an “I thought,” to witness the experience. Scriptures call this entity “*prajna jiva*,” the deep-sleeper.

The subtle memory of the dreamless experience is an indisputable proof of two factors. (1) The existence of an object of experience and (2) the existence of the experiencer. Therefore, by inference, we evidently conclude that a subtle aspect of our apparent existence was there to directly witness and register the experience of deep sleep, which is conditioned by an un-differential state of *tamoguna*.

But scriptures also say that in truth all “apparent” experiences, in all three states, are only awareness “apparently” experiencing itself. Your statement, “It's I,

awareness, who witness the dream of *Maya*, in all three states,” is the highest truth from the perspective of *mithya*.

From the perspective of awareness, the only reality (the one without a second), the highest truth, is that “it” cannot “really” experience objects, because all knowledge/experience is “not real,” whereas awareness alone is real.

But it so happens that, whenever under the spell of *Maya* (ignorance), awareness seemingly becomes the *jiva* and experiences objects. So awareness does indeed “apparently” experience itself in duality, and it requires *Maya*, *Isvara*, *jiva* and *jagata* (the world). Awareness is the true “knower” of the “apparent reality,” but only when it seemingly forgets its true nature to “become” the *jiva*.

A better usage of language may be: awareness does not experience and know. Awareness is the witnessing, conscious, knowing “principle” which enlivens *jivas*, the entities designed by *Isvara* to “seemingly” experience and know “apparent” objects – and you are “That” principle.

Danny: Objection: I comprehend things a little differently. For me, the “reflected” awareness is actually the same awareness plus the subtle body. The mirror image of my Self appears as a conscious knower, but it’s still known from beyond the mirror, from me, awareness. It is “I” that am aware, not the *jiva*. The reflection (subtle body) is not a knower that knows anything; it only appears to be so.

Identification with the reflection causes an experiential viewpoint of a world of duality. From the *jiva*’s perspective, objects are experienced; and from the perspective of the Self, they are shapes of knowledge. Even the subtle body is known by me.

Arlindo: Yes, Danny, intellectually speaking, original consciousness (OC) + the subtle body (RM, reflecting medium) gives “birth” to reflected consciousness (RC, *jiva*). Fundamentally, RC is the same as OC, in the same way as a reflected ray of light holds the same fundamental nature of direct sunlight – they are both made of light rays.

Another way to look at it is that original awareness (OC) is also the *jiva* (RC, consciousness appearing as *jiva*), but the *jiva* (RC) is not original awareness – in the same way the wave is not the ocean, except in its essential independent nature as H₂O. To use another analogy, we can say that *jiva* is also its thoughts and feeling, but thoughts and feelings are not the *jiva* – *jiva* is RC, reflected consciousness, the apparent knower of thoughts and feelings. *Jiva* is not RM, the reflecting medium, or the subtle body. The *jiva* is OC in association with *Maya* to produce RM, on which OC reflects to produce *jiva*. RC (*jiva*) is the reflected light of consciousness. *Jiva*’s true fundamental nature is OC.

In order to avoid superimposition, I find it important to emphasize that the *jiva* (RC) is not equal to OC (pure original consciousness), except in its fundamental essential nature as awareness. The idea that *jiva* is awareness is often used to superimpose *jiva* (*mithya*) on awareness (*satya*). *Mithya* is also *satya* in nature, but *satya* is not equal to *mithya*.

The statement “*Tat Tvam Asi*” (You Are That) can be easily misunderstood, because deprived of its context (the entire teachings), it does not clarify the implied meaning

of the statement. The knowledge “I (in my essential nature) am awareness” frees the *jiva* from the constraint derived from the identification with what is bound by time and space. It represents the end of suffering, but it does not turn the *jiva* into awareness or make it disappear. The *jiva* remains as awareness, and with the knowledge of its true nature as awareness.

In your following paragraph, you assert: “It is I that am aware, not the *jiva*.” Yes, surely. *Jiva* (RC) depends on original awareness (OC), therefore *jiva* does not have its own awareness. “Awareness is aware,” but this statement needs to be deprived of any sort of experiential connotation, since awareness, the existent-knowing-conscious principle, does not know or experience phenomenal objects, except with the aid of the apparent *jiva*. Awareness is neither a knowing nor an experiencing entity, in the sense that it solely experiences its own limitless conscious existence with or without objects.

And I also agree with you in your last statement, “The reflection (*jiva*) is not a knower that knows anything, it only appears to be so.” The *jiva*, although the only “experiencing entity” available in this apparent order of reality, does not really experience/know any object. Fundamentally, since the universe and its objects are not real, and therefore as good as non-existent, it is all about awareness experiencing itself as apparent objects, which are not real. Awareness is the only reality. It can only “really” experience itself.

Stan: Hi, Danny. I can see where you’re coming from because you’re right in what you said here:

“The mirror image of myself appears as a conscious knower, but it’s still known from beyond the mirror, from my (positionless) position, from me. It is I that am aware, not the *jiva*.”

When Arlindo said, “But since pure awareness is not an experiencing entity, I would rather say that *jiva*’s causal body (subconscious mind) experiences the absence of objects of the dreamless-sleep state. These subconscious experiences leave behind a very subtle trace or memory, which in retrospect allows us to remember the peaceful and limitless experience of no thoughts/objects.”

It looks rather like Arlindo is saying that the causal body is taking the place of awareness and usurping its place as the knower or ultimate subject.

However, Arlindo said to Alex, “We could say that pure awareness experiences the deep-sleep state, but since pure awareness is not an experiencing entity...” and this is of course true.

In the same way though, awareness is also not a knowing entity.

As we know, it is that by which you know what you know and know what you don’t know.

As the topic of inquiry was “Who knows the deep-sleep state?” by extension of the original statement of “The object in deep sleep is the absence of thoughts,” and we take the above statements to be true, who on earth is the knower of the deep-sleep state?

Arlindo said, “We evidently conclude that a subtle aspect of our own existence was

there to witness and register the experience of deep sleep.”

This seems pretty difficult to make sense of! A “subtle aspect” of our own existence was witnessing and registering? Just how many of us “witnesses” are there here?!

The answer is in Arlindo’s reply: “I would rather say that Alex’s causal body (subconscious mind) experiences the absence of objects of the dreamless-sleep state.”

It helps to remember that the causal body belongs to *Isvara*, which does not merge into the Self until *pralaya*, the end of the cosmic cycle. So here the Self/pure awareness is not “directly” experiencing or knowing the deep-sleep state.

Because the causal body is subtler than the subtle body, the instrument of experience, it cannot be known directly. The means of knowledge for the causal body is inference, which is a valid means of knowledge. You observe some kind of subtle-body phenomenon, and you know that it has a cause because you do not have an effect without a cause.

I believe that this is why Arlindo could say, “The memory of an experience is an indisputable proof of two factors. (1) The existence of an object of experience and (2) the existence of the experiencer (subtle body). Therefore, by inference, we evidently conclude that a subtle aspect of our own existence was there to witness and register the experience of deep sleep.”

That “subtle aspect” being the causal body, as I understand it.

This leaves the Self/pure awareness clear from being in any way reliant on objects, in this case the object of deep sleep, but at the same time the object is known.

These are some further thoughts, and I stand to be corrected.

Arlindo: Perfect, Stan, and thank you for further clarifying what I tried to say. *Jiva*’s causal body is a very subtle *vritti*/thought. It is from that “I thought” that witnessing of the absence of objects in the sleep state takes place. I love you, brother.